

Performing Arts is a way of expressing ideas, emotions and thoughts to all areas of society using any capability of the body as a tool. In this essay I am going to discuss the ways in which I achieved this idea through the practical work produced in music, dance and drama modules. For each module a stimulus was given which led to the devise-rehearse-performance process. A final performance was then created integrating all three arts using another given stimulus.

During the Drama module we were given a poem called 'Seven Poems' written by Antonin Artaud. We were to devise a piece of drama not only stimulated by this poem but also in the style of the writer. We made our own notes on the language of the poem and interpreted it in our own way; this meant no two pieces of drama would be the same as we all have individual ideas and opinions. However when we came together in our groups we discussed our notes and points and came to a group decision about what we thought the poem meant and what it represented before beginning to develop thoughts, actions and finally a narrative.

The piece was to be in the style of Artaud. This meant a very surrealistic piece with little dialogue, used just as a mode of communication. Instead we would use our bodies and physicality to communicate our message to audience; this places emphasis on a variety of language sorts - physical, verbal and visual. His work was very much based on ritual primitivism and releasing the dark forces of the soul and seeing the dark side of human nature. We needed to create a piece exploring all these points and more.

My group began by creating a physical motif as our starting point; we incorporated the idea of ritualism by having someone acting as a cross and another person acting as

a crucified person being attached to this cross. I sat in the middle of the acting space rocking back and forth giving rhythm to the scene. The distant proxemics between the 'cross' and me showed the distant relationship between the characters we were beginning to create, at that time. This was successful as it gave us an idea of where to go next without tying us down to a script so early in the devising process.

We introduced music to the first motif by use of our own voices, we felt this would give a more surreal effect and we had more freedom to create the appropriate sounds. Here we introduced a few lines of stylised dialogue, we scripted these so we had direction and to help us remember it in the future. We extracted these lines from the poem showing our knowledge and interpretation.

The crucified member of the group became a temptress and danced her way around the cross with very strong physicality, we wanted to give the impression of sexuality as we saw it in an extract from "Strange Fish" by DV8, a play by Artaud himself, where a lot of dance is used. We wanted to show a big contrast in proxemics here to show how two seemingly unrelated characters have suddenly become involved with each other. A few lines of dialogue were used only to communicate to the audience. The final scene shows us all crawling to the very front of the stage and banging our hands, on either side, on the floor. This again builds up tension, but the audience are shocked when all that happens is that we show a gesture that has been repeated throughout the piece and shows good physicality.



We spent 25% of each lesson talking and the rest practical, this was to make suggestions of new ideas and talk about any research we had done since the last lesson regarding our drama piece and to discuss costume and props or any problems we had.

We individually worked on our characterisation and experimented with any effects that we might want to use. We wrote our own script for our own dialogue so these could be developed in more detail individually.

Basically we just ran through it over and over again. The significance of this repetition was to familiarise ourselves with the material and running order, and to check whether it all ran smoothly. I found this helpful and after a rigorous rehearsal session there was an obvious difference in quality and the timing was much better. Our final performance went to plan and we received extremely good feedback from the audience. They commented on the temptress's strong physicality on the cross, how fantastic the dialogue was, how the physical theatre convention really worked especially when eating the "being" from inside me and how at this point all of my group's performances were very strong. They talked of how our characterisation was very strong and how the costume assisted the overall performance.

We were given a stimulus of a painting called "King of the Castle" by Reuben Mednikoff for the dance module. In groups we brainstormed notes, ideas and first impressions made about the image, before beginning to develop thoughts and movements.

We wanted to create a dance with a variety of different styles to show our knowledge and appreciation of dance. Christopher Bruce had influenced us, as we had studied a

dance choreographed by him called “Swansong”. We had also studied “Strong Language” by Richard Alston and so took influence of relationships conveyed in dance from him also. We wanted to show the idea of a child’s hesitation between leaving the mother’s womb, entering life and staying inside it. We raised the questions “shall I stay in or go out”, and “where does my real power lie”. As we felt that is what the picture represented.

We introduced a hypnotic music, called “Queen Adreena” this gave the impression of innocence and had no regular beat so was easy to improvise a dance project to. We started to devise a motif that would be the main dance idea, the “child” and the “mother/womb” danced in unison with very close proxemics to show harmony, the dynamics were extremely light and gentle; again to show innocence. The two people who represented “life” or the “outer world” created a different motif, again in unison and also mirroring one another, to show that they are also harmonised, the dynamics here were slightly sharper as it symbolizes a new, almost “scary” concept. Finally “temptation” created a motif simply with gestures with heavy, sharp and strong dynamics to suggest weight and anger. Dynamics were used throughout to distinguish difference between characters. The juxtaposition on stage created chaos and confusion on stage linking to the questions raised by the picture.

A crawling action was used for the temptation to travel across stage to the child and mother/womb this suggested a being possibly not human. He breaks the child and the mother/womb apart with use of falling and turning to show a definite separation and immediate confusion of where the child belongs. Temptation leads the child to life/the outer world character where the motif created is repeated, however we developed it by adding an extra character, who moves in canon to show a clear leader (life) and a follower (child), the levels are changed as the child sinks to ground level to show how

little it is compared to the outer world and the movements to get out of the motif were changed as the child breaks free, ruining the bond of life and heads back to the womb with circular pathways to again suggest confusion.

The womb/mother and child repeated their motif again with developed ideas; the placement on stage was changed, as was the direction and the movements to get in and out of motif. Suddenly there is break in the balance held at the end of the motif as the inevitable has come, the child is ready to leave the womb. Circular pathways and perplexing directions are used, filling the whole of the dancing space signifying confusion from the child's perspective.

We held a still for a few seconds, where the whole group was very close and orderly showing the power of the child, as it grows. One by one we moved away and stood in a linear position and danced a short sequence in very linear pathways, moving forwards to again show power. The dynamics are strong, sharp and heavy to show strength. The final still was used to show unity, as we all link into one and show all the things that make the child, with very close contact to show a final intimate relationship. It gives the audience the impression of power and security.

We individually, or in small groups worked on our motifs, dynamics, actions and relationships and experimented with any effects that we might want to use. We did this so that each section of dance could be developed and perfected individually.

Our main rehearsal technique was repetition. The significance of this was to familiarise ourselves with the material and running order, and to check whether it all ran smoothly. If there was a problem with a specific area we discussed it and focused on it so we could perfect that area. We also had the opportunity to gain feedback from one member of the group who was unable to dance due to injury. We listened to her constructive criticism and worked on the areas she suggested.

Our final performance in the dance module was successful, however there was room for improvement our motifs could have been developed and varied in more original ways, audience feedback show they thought there was limited dynamic range which was possibly limited by the music choice, showing the importance of music within a dance piece. I felt we could have experimented more with extremities of dynamics. The audience however felt the placement on stage for each group was carefully considered and there was a varied use of direction. There were varied groupings on stage, which created a visual impact for the audience, and there was a good use of contact and support.

We had a very open stimulus for our final module of music. We looked at a performance by “Stomp” by Luke Cresswell. Stomp is a rhythm-based group that combine simple rhythms with everyday objects used as instruments. We were instructed to create a piece in their style; this meant a very rhythmic piece with possibly some sort of theme and links with dance movements to add interest to the audience.

In our group we each started to improvise and develop rhythms using everyday objects such as classroom chairs and dustbin lids to create unusual timbres. A strong accent was kept on the first beat to keep the rest of the beats in time. The rest of the group used variations around this steady pulse to create a melody that was repeated throughout the piece. We wanted to show a big contrast in texture to create tension and so took the pace and the volume very low with two members of the group hitting the legs of a chair with a beater alone so very little was heard, then there was an explosion where the texture became very different with many layers of sound.

We introduced dance movements very late in the devising process, we wanted to add interest for the audience to the performance rather than them just watching us hit

things. We included simple turns and jump and enhanced the texture and timbre by adding voice sound effects also, with simple shouts at important points in the piece. As we devised the piece early we had plenty of time to rehearse and perfect areas, we used repetition as our main technique as in the past it has obviously been the most successful, and trial and error where we felt appropriate, which worked well. I felt our music performance was successful because we thought long and hard about specific decisions relating to melody, harmony, texture, timbre and rhythm knowing that these would make the music interesting for an audience. Our whole piece had been strongly influenced by a piece of rhythm music we looked at as a class, called “Clapping Music” by Steve Reich, it used a technique called phasing and below is the rhythm pattern used.

<b>Pulse</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>Group</b>								
A	X		X		X		X	
B		X		X		X		X
C				X	X			
D	X				X			
E	X	X						
F							X	X

For our integrated piece we were given a choice of stimuli, we chose a painting by Dali called “face of War”. We found it quite disturbing and felt we could make a really thrilling piece of theatre reflecting it.

When devising the piece we decided we needed to concentrate on the five aspects of each art form to create a truly effective and interesting piece. We also tried to layer the art forms wherever possible to create an appropriate atmosphere.

We found it easy to set out each scene on paper and brainstormed ideas. We then considered the aspects and finally how we could layer all the forms together. This was useful as it gave us a clear indication of where the piece was going, and gave us a starting point.

The main technique used in the devising process was improvisation, as we all felt that devising should be about spontaneity, excitement and originality. This was successful as none of us had any idea where the other would go next, although we were sticking to our original intentions. All the scenes were fresh and had many different dynamics. At the beginning of each session we used a technique suggested to us called “The Crystal Ball” in which we recalled what we remembered most powerfully from the previous lesson. In silence we recreated what we personally remembered. This showed us the most important sections from our improvised scenes as these are the ones stuck most strongly in our minds, and so would strike the audience also. So we began to form a definite script in writing to build on.

We felt research was vital to the performance as our stimulus has a lot of history, we felt depth of research allows us to communicate with the audience on a variety of levels. Our piece would be layered, a complex understanding shown through



characterisation, scene and image, we were determined to make available to the audience what we interpreted from the picture.

The inclusion of dance in the piece alongside other forms I felt was the hardest to do. However we included a motif that was repeated throughout and developed and varied by changing positioning on stage and heights. We integrated this with drama as it showed a fighting scene at one point and the killing of innocent people that we felt was being shown in the picture. This immediately created a theatrical platform from which we could move forward from, incorporating music. Lots of dance actions took place as every time we moved on stage we considered linking it to dance. So simple walking was changed to show characterisation, there was falling used to show death etc. We showed relationships in the motif as it was danced in unison showing the characters are in the same state of mind and are all thinking alike. Cannon is used to show leadership and a struggle that is taking place linking it to drama. The dynamics throughout the piece are mostly light as the characters are in a delicate state of mind, however they change dramatically when the struggle begins to sharp and heavy. The performance space was filled with circular pathways to suggest confusion this eventually contrasted with linear shapes that suggest underlying power.

We discovered that it was easier to use music during the dance movements from the beginning rather than putting the music to the routine after. We learnt that once a theme or motif has been found, the music is the most important choice determining the way in which the piece develops.

We linked as much dance as we could to drama and found that simple movements classed as dance were very effective in dramatic moments in our piece.

We used very little dialogue as we wanted our piece to be in the style of Artaud and so used a poem that reflected the painting simply to communicate with the audience. Tension was built up through dialogue at the beginning, as it was very loud and confrontational, the music added to this effect. Characterisation was shown more through the dance aspect, as relationships were established. Physicality was also shown and very important in dance, and also when one member of our group was tied down on the floor, she writhed around showing excellent physicality. Music is a key aspect to perfecting a piece and adding the final effect.

We stamped our feet in the beginning tableaux to add rhythm and tension to the scene. A simple triangle was used to create the rhythm of a clock chiming and create a very strong timbre that was used effectively to set mood. We used rhythm, harmony and melody to enhance all parts of drama, dance and the overall mood.

Once we knew we had included all aspects we began rehearsing, perfecting and linking all the scenes together.

Rehearsal is an important feature of the process as it is a process of shaping and refining a concept into a complete theatrical state. It is a constant process of decision-making and creation. When rehearsing we basically used repetition varying the person being the director for each run through. This way each of us got to see what the audience would view and make appropriate changes where we thought necessary, it also gave us the opportunity to receive personal constructive criticism, so we could work on a specific areas individually. We continued throughout this period to experiment with any effects we wanted to use.

I felt our performance was extremely successful was because we had focused rehearsals where objectives were continually set and techniques to achieve them employed. We ensured we had the freedom to work spontaneously in performance

and not to be intimidated when voicing our ideas, this guaranteed freshness and excitement for the audience and ourselves.

It met the requirements of the course because we developed our technical skills by devising a piece of theatre that integrated dance, music and drama. It was original work rather than repertoire although it was inspired by exemplar material and it had an identified purpose and structure. The technical skills improvising, rehearsing and performing we introduced and used as a way of devising the performance material. Finally we included all the elements needed to make a good dance/drama/music piece. We were faithful to our original intention of creating a unique piece of theatre that linked all three art forms together and displayed our interpretation of the given stimulus.

Audience feedback was very good, they specifically commented on the dramatic setting of mood at start, how the image, dialogue and music all contributed to a most appropriate atmosphere, how we used good variety to make it very interesting for an audience, the excellent layering of the art forms and how they were all very well linked.

I think they reacted in this way because we thought long and hard about specific decisions relating to the fifteen aspects knowing that these would make the piece interesting to an audience. We were keen to work in a physical way, using stylised structures in our exploration, our final piece showed this and so our excitement for the piece reflected upon the audience.

Overall we worked with commitment and courage to create a piece of theatre that I felt was thrilling and disturbing to watch and I am extremely proud of what we produced. We consciously explored new ways of expressing ideas in theatre language. We taught and learnt from each other and were always ambitious and dedicated.

These aspects are as important as talent when producing a performance I felt this combined effect shaped our piece and made it successful.